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IMMIGRANTS IN THE SECOND GENERATION: CHALLENGE TO THE FRENCH MODEL OF INTEGRATION

Immigration – one of the EU's most burning issues

Europe has for centuries been a place where cultures, religions and ethnicities mixed. This led on the one hand to progress and cultural enrichment, but on the other, to the most bloody conflicts. Nowadays, this diversity has increased: migrations are a common phenomenon on all levels: local, national, regional and global. With the end of the colonial era, a large number of former citizens claimed the right to settle down in the former metropolises. This was when the first major communities of non-Europeans began to appear on the continent. The economic situation after the second world war created an urgent need for workforce, and Western Europe eagerly invited people from Maghreb, Turkey, Middle East, and Asia to come and work in the coal mines, factories, and at construction sites to rebuild their cities and infrastructure demolished during the war.

This first wave of immigration to Western Europe arrived in the early years largely unnoticed, since the ones who came to work were generally young, single men. However, some years later, most of them married, very often to women who they brought from their home countries, and had children. At that time immigrant communities began to benefit from their rights to use the health care, education system, and other social services. Citizens of the host countries began noticing the newcomers in their everyday life and in many cases, did not see them in a positive light. They were afraid to lose their cultural integrity, worried about the state pay-

ing for large families of the immigrant workers, and – not used to see such cultural and religious differences – often reacted in a prejudiced way. European states had to decide which model of society to adopt, how to tackle these differences, and how to alleviate social tensions. The specific character and features of each nation determined the implemented policy: the United Kingdom adopted the model present in the Anglo-Saxon world, namely multiculturalism (developed in Canada and adopted also by Australia), France chose to continue with its republican model, with a very clear separation of church and state. Similarly did Sweden, where besides this a welfare-state model was developed. The Netherlands decided to follow a policy of openness deriving from its tradition of freedom and religious tolerance. The European Community, at that time without strong political personality, did not regulate this movement. Only later, it started to look closer into the issue, especially since the meeting of the European Council in Tampere in 1999, but the enduring problem is that there is not enough consensus for a comprehensive immigration policy for the whole of the EU.

According to Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, managing the challenge of immigration is a test for the EU: a failure will result in social divisions and declining standards of life, while a success will enrich it and strengthen¹. Even though the European Commission has intensified its efforts towards common solutions in the area of immigration and integration of immigrants², there disputes in this field are plenty among the Member States. The growing popularity of extreme right-wing parties is a sign of discontent among an increasing proportion of EU citizens (the elections in the last few years have led to the strengthening of the French National Front led by Le Pen, the Vlaams Belang in Belgium, the Danish People's Party, etc.). Mainstream politicians, often acting as populists, react to these negative feelings and mention restricting the immigration law and limiting the acceptance of asylum seekers. The French immigration law of 2006 is the first step towards selective immigration: it emphasises the recruitment of skilled workers and facilitates the stay of foreign students but limits access to residence and citizenship. Since most immigrants in France (64.3% of cases)³ state family reunification as the reason of entry, the new law has become more restrictive predominantly in this area: one can bring the family over after three years of stay, and a person marrying a French citizen (in a process that takes up to two years) can start the process of application for citizenship only after four years. The current govern-

¹ K. A. Annan, *Why Europe Needs an Immigration Strategy*, article of 29.01.2004, based on the Secretary General's speech at the European Parliament, <http://secint24.un.org/News/oss/sg/stories/sg-29jan2004.htm>.

² Among other actions, the European Commission issued a "Green Paper on an EU approach to managing economic migration" (2004), and a "Policy Plan on Legal Migration" (2005). At the same time, the Commission makes efforts to promote the integration of migrants, issuing a "Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners" (2004, reissued in 2007). The EU has also defined the priorities for fighting the illegal immigration and established a relevant action plan. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/immigration/fsj_immigration_intro_en.htm.

³ Migration Policy Institute, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Backgrounder2_France.php.

ment passed a law allowing DNA tests to prove the genetic ties linking people who claim the admission to France on the basis of the family reunification policy, what is more, one of the ministers announced introduction of immigration quotas. During the French presidency (due in the latter half of 2008) Sarkozy will presumably promote similar ideas on the Community level⁴. Tightening the immigration policy will not resolve the problems that Western Europe is facing: a successful integration is crucial for social cohesion in Europe and peaceful life of people of different backgrounds.

Who are, however, the immigrants who cause so many controversies and so much fear? According to a Eurostat report (2006), there are around 25 million non-nationals living in EU Member States, a huge majority of whom are non-EU citizens⁵. In Belgium and Sweden 12% of inhabitants were born in another country, in France – 8%, and in Denmark – 6.5%⁶. However, most of media-hyped and widely discussed events were not linked with these immigrants. The violent struggles in Bradford (UK), the burning cars in the French *banlieus* (peripheries), the murders of honour performed by Turk-Germans on their sisters – in none of these, the leading actors were the newly arrived immigrants. These actors were often members of a group emerging on the European arena: the children of immigrants – EU citizens, formally equal and free individuals, but in fact living on the border between two cultures: the one which their parents came from, and the one that surrounds them. Such actions are a proof of their anxiety and frustration that can turn into aggression and violence. Let us analyse this group in detail, using the example of France.

France, a friendly land?

France has always praised its openness towards foreigners, calling itself a *terre d'accueil*: a friendly land. Indeed, it hosted numerous foreigners, ranging from Leonardo Da Vinci to the parents of the current President of the Republic. However, the 20th-century immigrants not always saw France this way. In the times of the first world war, many citizens of French colonies were forced into the Foreign Legion (*Légion étrangère*), while others were shipped to France because the country lacked workforce in agriculture and in the industry. The same phenomenon repeated after the second world war, with the difference that the colonies had ceased to exist and seeking work in France became a matter of free choice. Theorists of postcolonialism, as e.g. Albert Memmi⁷, perceive it as the reproduction of colonialism: the

⁴ "The Economist", *The Trouble with Migrants*, 22.11.2007, http://www.economist.com/world/europe/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=10193441.

⁵ Eurostat, *Statistics in Focus, Population and Social Conditions – 8/2006: Non-national Populations in the EU Member States*, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-NK-06-008/EN/KS-NK-06-008-EN.PDF.

⁶ "The Economist", *The Trouble with Migrants...*

⁷ A. Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, Minneapolis–London 2006.

populations of the “Third World” were first exploited by colonisers on their own territory, and nowadays, they are again in a position of dependency from the West, working in poorer types of jobs and suffering from exclusion and discrimination as immigrants in Europe. In the 1950s, there were many Tunisians and Moroccans (also Algerians after they became independent in 1962) settling down in France, although the state gives preference to immigrants from poorer European countries: Italy, Spain and Portugal. Nevertheless, the economic boom lasting for about thirty years, the so called *Trente Glorieuses* (1945–1975), and the pressing need for work-force made the immigration process hard to control. It became more and more difficult to find accommodation for workers and their families, and as a consequence, fields of provisional houses or barracks, called *bidonvilles*, started to grow around major cities. The French state began to notice the problem and a Directorate for Population and Immigration was created with the goal of providing housing and putting an end to the slums in the peripheries⁸. It attained its goal, but other problems arose, including especially increasingly common racist attitudes and acts of aggression towards immigrants. As a response, in 1972 the government introduced a law against racism, but the recession starting in the mid-70s caused unemployment, which resulted in more tensions between immigrants and the French population, who blamed them for all the social and economic problems. In this period, most European states closed their borders, but there were still large numbers of immigrants arriving as a result of marriages and family reunification processes. There were also increased numbers of asylum-seekers, mainly the so called “boat people” from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, who often found it difficult to acquire the refugee status and end up as *sans-papiers*: illegal immigrants with no status at all.

In the 1980s, the French began to realise that the presence of “foreigners” is a fact and closing the borders or limiting the arrivals would not resolve their problems. Instead, they had to think about integration. In 1981, the parliament passed a law allowing the freedom of association for the immigrants, and a few years later introduced a 10-year residence card available after three years of permanent stay in France. The tensions did not disappear, however: in 1983 there were clashes in the streets between the supporters of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front, an extreme right-wing party that built its position using racist and xenophobic slogans, and the immigrants backed by young French, who saw the National Front as a threat to the French values of tolerance and liberty. While a growing number of the French, aware that immigrants are an integral part of the society, formed associations in support of equality and acceptance of ethnic and religious minorities, there were still large groups of people who continued to fear the newcomers.

The foundations of the contemporary French state are based on the ideals of the Revolution: *Liberté – Egalité – Fraternité*, and of the Enlightenment’s legacy, *républicanisme* as conceptualised by Rousseau. These values presume that every individual is equal in the eyes of the State, no matter what his or her origin, cul-

⁸ Cité nationale de l’histoire de l’immigration, <http://www.histoire-immigration.fr>.

ture, ethnicity and religion are. The State is supposed to be neutral and does not take into account one's beliefs, identity or community affiliation, as in the multicultural model. The faith of the French in republicanism can be compared to the American dream⁹ – an idealistic vision detached from reality. Unfortunately, this vision sometimes overclouds the real problems of the immigrant families, formally equal, but often discriminated against because of how they look, dress, eat or what their last name is. Another core principle in France is *laïcité* – the neutral, secular character of all public institutions. This has become one of the most discussed ideas of the French model on the occasion of the so called “Headscarf Affair”. The controversy was whether Muslim girls should be allowed to wear a hijab when attending state schools. The garment was eventually banned by president Jacques Chirac in 2003 as experts claimed that wearing a headscarf was not always a matter of individual choice to manifest one's devoutness. It could be used as an instrument of pressure by the fundamentalists to manifest the presence of Islam in everyday life and to make women that did not wear the veil feel guilty¹⁰. According to Will Kymlicka, a true neutrality of the state is impossible, because if a void is created in the public sphere, it will certainly be filled by some kind of ideology¹¹. The question is whether the French Republic's ideals, rooted so deeply in history, have not become a form of a political “religion” and whether they still apply to the society, after so many changes that it has undergone.

The Second Generation

Only 10% of the participants of the unrest in the French urban peripheries in 2005 were foreign-born. The others were French citizens, raised and educated in the Republic's schools, who are familiar with the rules governing its society. This fact came as a shock to the French, believing so firmly in the socialisation (and assimilation) that their system of education should ensure. Who are these young people, in between two cultures, so violently struggling to attract the attention and express their anger? There is a number of factors, in different areas of these teenagers' life, which may cause tensions.

Family

After the riots at the French *banlieus*, the media and common French people would ask about the parents of the rebellious youths. Why were they unable to bring up

⁹ M. Lamont, E. Laurent, *Identity: France Shows its True Colours*, “International Herald Tribune”, 6.06.2006, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/06/05/opinion/edlamont.php>.

¹⁰ P. Weil, *Lever le voile*, Paris 2005.

¹¹ W. Kymlicka, *Nation-building and Minority Rights: Comparing West and East*, “Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies” 2000, Vol. 26, No. 2, p. 183–212.

their children to be respectful citizens? Why did they not prevent their children from going into the streets and rebelling? The reasons are numerous. Let us examine more closely the profile of immigrant families.

The experience of migrating to another country may often prove traumatic for a family. Not only it provokes changes in the usual lifestyle and habits, but also a transformation of relations between the couple and their children, and even a reversal of previously performed roles. Usually, families do not emigrate together at the same time. It is easier for one of the parents to go first, find employment for himself/herself, accommodation for the family and become better informed about the social and cultural context of the host society. Then, when the rest of the family has arrived, he or she can serve them as a “guide” The same applies to single men or women who emigrated in search of work, and later married someone from the country of their origin. This situation is perfectly described by the novel of Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, where a Bangladeshi immigrant in London brings along a young bride, found for him through his family’s matchmaking¹². Such situation is very unfavourable for the spouse: she feels lost in the new country, not knowing the language or the city, confined to the home, with the only information about the surrounding world being transmitted to her by the husband. This design is repeated in many immigrant families, where one of the spouses becomes completely dependent on the other one, feeling insecure and vulnerable when he or she is not around. The internal crisis this creates is even stronger when it is the wife that is the intermediary for her husband. In families coming from traditional societies, where the role of a man consists in taking care of his family, being the active one, while the wife performs domestic duties, this crisis is even more acute¹³. A man who is forced to stay at home, relying only on his wife, might easily become frustrated and even resort to alcohol and repeated violence. This is also a problem of many immigrants in France, where – with the economic boom finished – many men lost their jobs in factories or in the construction sector. With their husbands now unemployed, their wives had to provide for the family (most of them being employed in the services, where the number of jobs did not decrease so dramatically). Another problem of the immigrant families is that there is no extended family to rely on when the children are born, so parents are just left to themselves in the process of bringing up their children. Moreover, lack of support from relatives is a negative factor in cases of domestic violence, because a woman has nobody to turn to for help, often not aware of the existence of institutions specialised in this field, whereas in Arab societies, she may for instance return to her father or seek help from her brother(s). The fact that grandparents are not present plays also a role in the way the children’s identity forms: the presence of an older generation gives the young the feeling of permanence and stability¹⁴.

¹² M. Ali, *Brick Lane*, London 2003.

¹³ F. Balsamo, *Famiglie di migranti. Trasformazione dei ruoli e mediazione culturale*, Roma 2003.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

As for the relations between parents and children, there is a whole range of possible problems. First of all, the two generations often have divergent views on the host society and on the country of origin, due to different experience acquired in their lives. Children are more embedded in the host society since they go to school, meet peers from different cultural backgrounds, learn about history, political system and values of the country where they live, and – maybe most importantly – know the local language very well. For these reasons, their views and ideas are shaped differently than those of their parents'. The latter ones often meet a limited number of people from the host society, only at work or while contacting public institutions, generally preferring to stay among their national or ethnic community. Another problem is the reversal of roles, which often appears in immigrant families. Children, because of their cultural competences understand the larger society of the host country better, and become "interpreters of culture" for their parents, and sometimes – literally – interpreters. They help the parents to deal with many matters pertaining to the public sphere, such as contacting state institutions or filling out forms. This phenomenon is positive in itself, but can also have negative outcomes, for example the loss of the parents' authority and the feeling of superiority among children, which can possibly result in disrespecting the parents. Obviously, there are other factors that add to this difficult relation between children and parents: the conflict between the values of the parents' culture of origin, which they often wish to pass on to the next generation, and the Western culture, in which the children live¹⁵. Another issue is simply a normal teenage crisis and uncertainty about one's identity, often experienced at that age. Additionally, the economic factor plays a part as well: immigrant parents, usually employed as unskilled workers, and often having numerous children, cannot afford all the books, clothes, toys or electronic gadgets that are so important in a consumer society, especially at a young age. It seems to be an unimportant element, but subcultures have their own cultural codes, expressed in fashion and lifestyle; and belonging to a group is crucial for teenagers. All these factors might contribute to frustrations in young people of immigrant origin, leading to situations in which they somehow channel this negative energy.

Education

Another question that France was posing itself is how people brought up in the Republic's schooling system, supposed to transmit all the values of a citizen, can perform such actions as destroying public property. In its report on the education of children from immigrant families (2006), the OECD shows that in many Western countries these children are on average two years behind their peers, and the state does not sufficiently help the young to eliminate these differences¹⁶. There are three

¹⁵ O. Roy, *Global Muslim. Le radici occidentali nel nuovo Islam*, Milano 2003.

¹⁶ OECD Report, 15.05.2006, http://www.oecd.org/document/17/0,3343,en_33873108_33873870_36701777_1_1_1_1,00.html.

elements that determine the success of immigrants' children in education: the first one consists in the education strategies and knowledge capital of the parents. It has been proved that when parents are themselves better educated – whatever their profession in the host country is – they motivate their children more and try to invest in their education (this applies not only to immigrant families). The second element is the openness of the school for children of different cultural backgrounds: how much it helps them in the integration, in learning the language, and to what extent it facilitates the intercultural contacts and the mutual learning. The third element is the immigration policy of a given country: whether parents have a legal status or citizenship, if there is a possibility of permanent stay in the country, and whether their documents and diplomas are respected¹⁷. Interestingly, the educational achievements of immigrant children depend to some extent on the nationality – for instance, the research among the second-generation immigrants in the USA undertaken by Rumbaut and Portes¹⁸ proves that the best results are achieved by Chinese immigrants' children, and in the case of France, the best pupils tend to be girls of Spanish origin¹⁹. Obviously, the nationality and the culture where the parents come from is of some importance, but there are also other factors, which influence performance of children of immigrants at school. In France, 61% of children of immigrants grow up in large families (defined as having at least four children), whereas the national average is only 15.5%. Among immigrants, around 80% of fathers are unskilled workers or unemployed, and 63% of them have only elementary education²⁰. This shows structural problems that immigrant families are facing and that reflect negatively on the education of their children. In fact, they tend to do worse at school: every other of them has repeated a year at least once (compared to one in four pupils being the national average) and in the exams leading to the *collège* (corresponding the junior high school level), there are visible differences in the results achieved by the children of immigrants (on average 6 points fewer in mathematics and 9 points fewer in French, when comparing to their peers)²¹. Fortunately, at the high school and university level, the situation looks much better: children who continue the schooling process are usually the ones more motivated by their families, who believe in the power of good education and hope that this will prevent their children from the problems they encountered themselves. Paradoxically, there is also a potential source of problems in this attitude: sometimes, parents want their children to succeed but at the same time they want to transmit to them the values

¹⁷ M. Ambrosini, *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, Bologna 2005.

¹⁸ R. Rumbaut, A. Portes, *The Second Generation in Early Adulthood: New Findings from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study*, Migration Information Source, 2006, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=445>.

¹⁹ M. Tribalat, *Faire France. Une grande enquête sur les immigrés et leurs enfants*, Paris 1995, [in:] M. Ambrosini, *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, Bologna 2005.

²⁰ P. Simon, *Une «question de la seconde génération» en France?*, <http://seminaire.samizdat.net/spip.php?rubrique31>.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

of their traditional culture, not realising that in order to be successful at school, they need to adopt some of the host country's values. This may be a contradictory message for the children, and it may put a lot of pressure on them.

In order to help immigrant children achieve good results, the French state has created a network of schools, called ZEP, *zones d'éducation prioritaires*, (priority zones of education) which would have more financial means and special rights in order to fight the problem of school failure among the second generation. There are nearly 9,000 such schools, but it seems that they do not achieve the expected results: many parents perceive them in a negative way, as schools for the "difficult" youth and do not want their children to attend them. What is more, the French schooling system becomes more and more segregated in an informal way, with parents choosing the establishment for their children according to its location and the ethnic background of the pupils. The idea of an affirmative action is impossible to carry out in France, where equality is the fundamental value and even a "positive discrimination" would be perceived as unjust. However, such an action has been performed "undercover" by the prestigious ENA, Ecole Nationale d'Administration, which started recruiting students from the above-mentioned ZEPs. To quote Francois Ameli, these students perform extremely well, even though they are sometimes accused of being accepted to the school on unfair terms²².

Employment and the public realm

There are various problems when it comes to the employment of immigrants and people of immigrant origin. Some of them cannot find work because they dropped out from the educational system, and others due to structural problems, as e.g. the lack of opportunities at the *banlieus*. According to Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, who analysed the situation of second-generation immigrants in the United States, one sees a downward assimilation in ghettos and immigrant neighbourhoods, which means that the young, having no positive examples around them, replicate the negative attitudes, the feeling of rejection from the society, the lack of opportunities and as a result create a form of anti-culture or even follow criminal models²³. Looking for a job, they often want to find something better than their parents have/had, because they are ashamed of them and their difficulties in everyday life. As the High Commission of Integration states, the work opportunities for immigrants' children are similar to those of their parents, although logically, they should be better, thanks to their knowledge of the language and of the country

²² Lecture of Prof. F. Ameli given at the Europaeum Graduate Workshop, entitled *Migration in the 21st Century – Challenge to the Nation-states?*, Charles University in Prague, 4th-6th April 2008.

²³ R. Waldinger, C. Feliciano, *Will the New Second Generation Experience "Downward Assimilation"? Segmented Assimilation Reassessed*, "Ethnic and Racial Studies" 2004, Vol. 27, No. 3, <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/waldinger/pdf/B6.pdf>.

where they have been brought up²⁴. Another huge problem is the discrimination on the labour market: according to the Ministry of Labour, many people with foreign-sounding names or a different skin colour find problems while finding a job, and sometimes they are not even invited to interviews²⁵. A few large companies made an experiment during their recruitment process: they asked for anonymous CVs from potential employees – as a result, the number of people with immigrant background among the employees increased considerably²⁶. At present, organisations dealing with integration of immigrants lobby for a law introducing anonymous CVs nation-wide, an action entitled “Companies in the colours of France”²⁷. The Sarkozy government, even though restrictive in immigration matters, includes the largest number of politicians with immigrant background, most of them being women. Rachida Dati, holding a double, French and Moroccan nationality, is the Minister of Justice. Senegal-born Rama Yade became the State Secretary in charge of Foreign Affairs and Human Rights, and is often called the “French Condoleezza Rice”. Fadela Amara, a feminist from an Algerian family, advocate for women from the *banlieues*, is the State Secretary for Urban Policies. This is a good sign, but many French fear that this is only Sarkozy’s move to win immigrant population’s support and that it will not change the situation of the regular inhabitants of the peripheries.

Culture

France, whether it wants it or not, is becoming more and more multicultural. Both the high art and the popular culture have changed, and many of the performers have different ethnic backgrounds. The popularity of such films as *La Haine* (The Hate) that depict the life of underprivileged young people in a poor neighbourhood on the peripheries of Paris, and of many other works touching similar topics, proves the need for a discussion on the situation of immigrants in France, and their children, torn between two cultures. The rap movement in France, second only to the American one, is one of the channels through which young people of immigrant origin can express all their frustration and anger against the rules governing the French society. There is also a *beur* culture, *beur* being a slang name for Arabs, which has its own radio, TV shows, magazines and fashion, combining elements of the Arab ethnicity and Western material civilisation. Diversity in French culture is certainly a positive phenomenon, but it still encounters opposition among some parts of the society, who consider it a threat to the “purity” of the country’s culture. Yet it is

²⁴ *Les Parcours d'intégration*, Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, 2001, <http://www.hci.gouv.fr>.

²⁵ *Chômeurs étrangers et chômeurs d'origine étrangère*, Publications Dares, 2000, <http://www.travail-solidarite.gouv.fr>.

²⁶ This example was brought up by Prof. Ameli in his lecture, Europaeum Graduate Workshop, *Migration in the 21st Century...*

²⁷ *Des entreprises aux couleurs de la France. Rapport Claude Bébéar*, November 2004, <http://www.institutmontaigne.org/des-entreprises-aux-couleurs-de-la-france-2392.html>.

a process that has already started: French youth slang uses words in Arabic, the fashion takes on ethnic elements, there are more and more restaurants serving food from different parts of the world. Even the French football team is composed in great majority of immigrants and children of immigrants! A new France is emerging and it is still *tricolore* – but now its three colours are *black-blanc-beur* and represent the Blacks, the Whites and the Arabs.

Conclusion

The second-generation immigrants are blamed for their negative attitude towards integration, but most of them are just rebellious teenagers, not much different from other young people from poor and underprivileged neighbourhoods. In their case, the tensions come from pathological families and/or economic privation, yet they are more acute due to their specific problems: experiencing racism and discrimination, feeling rejected and isolated, dealing with their complex identities. Obviously, one cannot forget that a vast majority of people coming from immigrant families have no problem in combining two or more identities and they peacefully lead their lives in the French society.

France is in a difficult position, on the one hand trying to be faithful to its traditions and values, but on the other hand, the society is changing, due to migration, globalisation, the dynamics of the international relations, and various cultural influences. That is why – in order to avoid tensions among different groups of society and prevent social exclusion of some citizens – it needs to re-think its model of integration and possibly adjust it to the new circumstances. However progress in this field depends on effective cooperation between politicians and the civil society. If the government fails to listen to the voices from all social groups and does not take into account the specific problems of people with immigrant background, all the initiatives will be detached from reality and will not bring the expected results.